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CONTEMPORARY ECHOES

THE OBDURATE COMMISSION

(From the Harrisburg Telegraph)

George Harvey in his recent analysis of the results of the election intimated that President Wilson would be justified in recommending to Congress the abolition of the Interstate Commerce Commission. In view of what has transpired during the last year, and by reason of its continued arbitrary and inconceivable course of action, Colonel Harvey will have plenty of company in his attitude toward this remarkable body.

On top of an Administration war tax in time of peace and in further aggravation of repeated offenses, this commission, absolutely irresponsible to public sentiment, persists in its seesawing and delay at the expense of the business of the country. Referring to its latest performances, the *Philadelphia Ledger* says:

What was virtually a direct command issued by the Interstate Commerce Commission has resulted in an increase of passenger fares all over the eastern and central territory. At the very same time by a stroke of the pen the commission suspends an increase in freight rates in the western district.

If this all-powerful body had deliberately set out to create the greatest possible annoyance to the country, it could have chosen no better method of accomplishing that result than is found in its recent procedures. The Interstate Commerce Commission has stubbornly stood between 100,000,000 people and their only chance of a quickly revived business of all kinds.

Instead of bothering with the independence of the Filipinos, who are not ready for independence and may involve the United States in Oriental difficulties, the President might better, in his message to Congress next week, urge the prompt repeal of the act creating the Interstate Commerce Commission. When men appointed for certain specific duties involving the public welfare so far forget the real purpose of their appointment as to constitute themselves a supreme power, it is about time they should suffer official decapitation.

(From the Syracuse Post-Standard)

Col. George Harvey, who remains the shrewdest and sanest adviser the President has among those whose advice is given in plain sight of all people, believes that the heaviest load that the administration is now carrying is the Interstate Commerce Commission. The Colonel doesn't suggest that the President give the commissioners, two of them his own appointees, a good shaking and that he order them to do as he has said he would like them to do. Because the Commission is in name, as it is not in fact, a judicial body, he

would not do violence to the tradition that the judiciary must be independent of executive interference. He would accomplish the desired end by means no less drastic, but not open to the same objection:

We say plainly to the patient President that, if this particular body should persist in its present inexcusably dilatory, incomprehensibly stupid and arrogantly obdurate course, he can do no more popular thing than to ask a willing Congress to legislate it out of existence.

The Commission, perceptibly weakened by the withdrawal, first of Martin A. Knapp to become judge of the Commerce Court, next of Franklin K. Lane to become Secretary of the Interior, has become dilatory, stupid, and obdurate, because it has become subservient. Louis Brandeis has the members hypnotized. Militarism is no more hateful to Bryan, or the negro to Tillman or Vardaman, than the railroads are to him, and he is counsel to the Commission, assumed to be unbiased and fair-minded. He directs them that they have power under the laws to reduce railroad rates, but not to increase them. He, without any business experience, assumes to tell railroad managers where they may save millions. And the Commission leans upon him with a confidence in his judgment that is amazing.

Before prosperity can return in full swing there must be justice done the railroads. If the Commission will get rid of Brandeis, it will stem the rising tide of popular hostility, which may take form in legislation for its effacement.

A WARNING ELECTION

(From the Lowell Citizen)

The idea of Col. George Harvey—the original Wilson man—about the recent elections as bearing on the Wilson record, appears to be summed up in the quotation, "Not guilty—but don't do it again!" That is to say, he sees in the results of the late elections a distinct warning to the President and his advisers, although he is unable to say that the returns revealed anything like a direct rebuke. The quotation, therefore, does seem to fit pretty well. The country backed up the Administration on the whole, since it kept a small, and probably a sufficient, Democratic majority in the House; but there was an element about the whole thing that clearly did not reveal any great enthusiasm for keeping the Administration alive.

More than half the sentiment in favor of the Wilson régime is directed toward Mr. Wilson personally, and is based on the public's unreasoning, but very real, affection for a "man who does things" rather strengthily. Mr. Wilson is not particularly tactful, nor particularly masterful, so that one may rate him as either the one thing or the other; but he is enough of both things to get his own way with Congress; and people generally care not how this is done so long as done it is. What is more curious still, there seems to be a tendency to regard the doings of Congress, thus compelled by the President, as somehow to the discredit of Congress and to the credit of President Wilson. Had Mr. Wilson been up for acceptance or rejection at the polls in the late elections, we incline to believe he would have won, with considerable ease, even in States where the Congressmen devoted to his party were signally defeated. No one can explain that sort of thing by logic; but the public in such a matter simply isn't a logical creature.

Meantime there is reason to believe that the verdict really does look a

good deal like the one referred to by Colonel Harvey—"Not guilty—but don't do it again." That is to say, if Mr. Wilson's next two years are going to be like the past two, there is a practical certainty that he will not again be sent to the White House. One reads that in the result of the votes on November 3d. President Wilson, personally, has not yet lost his hold—but his Congress has suffered heavily for doing just about what the doctor ordered.

ECONOMY IN GOVERNMENT

(From the Portland Oregonian)

It is fervently to be hoped that Col. George Harvey knew whereof he wrote when he said in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*:

We have reason to believe that it is the purpose of Mr. Wilson to undertake a complete reformation of governmental appropriations such as Mr. Taft essayed somewhat tentatively and failed utterly to achieve.

It is unjust to Mr. Taft to say that he essayed this reform "somewhat tentatively," for he made it one of the cardinal points of his policy, and, so far as he could without the co-operation of Congress, he effected important economies. Had his recommendations been adopted, he would have effected more, but his plans were foiled by the jealousy of Congress for its functions and particularly by the partisan opposition of the Democrats in the second Congress of his term.

The necessity of financial reform by the Government has been made more apparent by the extravagance which the Democrats have heaped on that which they charged to the Republicans, and by the emergency taxes which they have imposed when the country is at peace. But the evil which must be removed is the outgrowth of a tendency which originates among the people. There has been a constant demand that the Government undertake new work in regulating railroads and banks; suppressing monopoly; protecting life on railroads and ships, in mines and against disease; protecting food from adulteration; extending the mail service, fostering agriculture, fisheries, and forestry.

Performance of this work requires employment of increasing thousands of men. Congress is nothing loath to establish new offices wherein the members' friends can draw salaries and have expense allowances, so it gladly gratifies the people. It does not show equal alacrity in abolishing offices which have become useless. Witness the desperate resistance to abolition of useless land, pension, and custom offices, navy-yards, and army posts.

When the people cease to demand that Congress spend more money, and when they demand that it spend less, Congress will change its course gradually, slowly, and reluctantly, only after the demand has been many times repeated.

NO EXTRA SESSION

(From the Albany Knickerbocker Press)

President Wilson has announced his administration is through heckling business. When the President made this announcement the country took him at his word. Congress will reconvene for the short session next Monday, and by law this session must end by March 4th. It is reported from Washington that the President is wondering whether he can escape the necessity of calling an extra session of Congress next spring. Those close to the Presi-

dent report that he would like to have Congress take a rest after March 4th next, but fears it will be impossible to put his legislative programme through by that time. Among the things upon the Wilson legislative programme are said to be the vicious Philippines independence bill and the ship-purchase bill. It is said the President is going to insist upon Government-owned ships.

Col. George Harvey, in reviewing the recent election, says the result was like the famed Scotch verdict, "Not guilty—but don't do it again."

If President Wilson has not realized the meaning of the recent election he has lost his political acumen. He is not as clear-headed politically as Colonel Harvey. What this country demands is a rest from Congressional legislation, and if President Wilson is wise or at all solicitous about the future of the Democratic party and his own future, he will ask that Congress pass the regular appropriation bills at the short session, hold expenditures down to a minimum, and adjourn. If President Wilson is wise there will be no extra session.

EIGHT MONTHS OF REST

(From the Washington Post)

Public opinion has already decreed that Congress has been a little too active in the past, and that a cessation of legislation is wholly desirable, but it is quite evident that unless there shall be an agreement with regard to the early disposition of all appropriation bills an extra session will become a necessity.

Extra sessions have been entirely too frequent in recent years. The continuous work of Congress doubtless has brought many members to an untimely grave and at the same time has ruffled the nerves of the business world. It is true that the thirteen months that elapse between the time the voters express their preference at the polls and the time the newly elected members take their seats is somewhat anomalous in a government supposed to be easily responsive to the public will, but there has never been any real complaint about the delay, and there is not likely to be in the future.

The voters at the last election clearly expressed their disapproval of the radical legislation which has been inflicted on the country in the last few years. They expressed their demand for a conservative and constructive era. They issued a mandate for better consideration of the business needs of the country.

If there had been a Presidential election the Republicans would have had a clear majority in the Electoral College. There were many confusing issues, but it was clear that the people were tired of agitation and wanted business peace and prosperity. Even so earnest a supporter of the Administration as Col. George Harvey described the verdict as "Not guilty, but don't do it again."

Although thirteen months must elapse before the will of the voters becomes effective, it is inconceivable that any party remaining in power by reason of the technical arrangement in the Constitution would wilfully use the days of grace allotted to it in order to force through additional legislation of the kind repudiated by the public. As a matter of fact, there is no present evidence that the Democratic leaders intend to do such a thing. The conservation measures that will be passed probably will be constructive, rather than restrictive, if amendments that are proposed are adopted.

What needs to be done, however, should be done quickly and in a business-like way. There is no need for the delay that usually marks the short session of Congress. The members should settle themselves to the prompt despatch

of public business, so that no extra session will be needed and the country may have at least eight months of rest.

PROSPERITY A REQUISITE

(From the Houghton Gazette)

The American people are not consciously unjust or ungenerous, but they know what they want when they need it; and that something just now is better times, which the party in power must provide or make way for another. When pockets are full and life is easy humans rather enjoy the nagging of one another and cheer on the demagogues, but once the pinch becomes universal they see there is but one boat containing all; and woe to him who rocks it.

That is quoted from an editorial by Col. George Harvey in *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. Like a great many other writings of the Colonel, that paragraph impresses all who read it as a careful, truthful, thoughtful, and succinct analysis of the situation in this country to-day. It says in one paragraph what we have tried, faultily, to say a number of times, and each time wasting a half-column or so in the effort.

Colonel Harvey precedes the paragraph which we quote above with this:

If President Wilson shall carry the second part of his programme to a successful conclusion through the resuscitation of business upon a large and sound basis, to the obvious material advantage of the whole people, there will be no changing of horses in crossing the stream two years hence. If he shall fail in that endeavor, even through no fault of his own, the Democratic party will surely go down to disastrous defeat. Excuses will avail nothing.

That, too, is true, and we hope that President Wilson wants to bring back prosperity, and we hope further that he has the power and influence and knowledge to work among his political cohorts to that end. We would only change one word in that quotation from the Colonel. We would put the word "may" for "will" in the sentence reading "there will be no changing of horses in crossing the stream."

THE ESTRANGEMENT OF NEW ENGLAND

(From the Washington Herald)

That the wholesale indictment of New Haven directors sits not lightly on the chest of New England is discovered also by Colonel Harvey. Politically this other Colonel has been taking the sense of the meeting and he presents his conclusions in the current issue of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*; presents them, too, in the manner, refreshing and forceful, that is Harvey's own. Colonel Harvey sometimes gives you the impression that he might have put Washington up to crossing the Delaware or assured Lincoln that it would be a good thing to say a few words at Gettysburg, but, for all that, this Colonel is a clear-thinking, forthrightly person who says something nearly every time he says.

"Not guilty, but—" is what he finds the general verdict of the country at the late election, with Lady Democracy as defendant at bar and Woodrow Wilson, *et al.*, as accomplices and co-conspirators. Pretty pat, that legal simile, in these days of statutory morals and ethics. Colonel Harvey finds that the East revolted against and stands estranged from the Administration.

The new tariff and wide-spread idleness he finds as the basic causes of revolt

and estrangement, but to him, too, "the wholesale and indiscriminate indictment of New Haven directors" was the finishing blow.

Colonel Harvey makes Connecticut his classic case, and he finds himself in complete agreement with the tart statement of Simeon Baldwin, Governor of the Commonwealth, that the grand jury return on the eve of election was the final blow at the defeated Democrats. "All New England," writes Colonel Harvey, "resented and still resents that proceeding, not merely, as Mr. Baldwin intimated, as having been timed for political effect, but as a travesty upon justice itself. This is evidenced beyond question by the press."

The Colonel establishes his case with an abundance of proof, including the forceful testimony of Rev. Dr. E. P. Parker, of Hartford, a leading clergyman of the State. Dr. Parker declares that he would rather go to hell with the right people than to enter the pearly gates of heaven with the wrong crowd. Dr. Parker was especially shocked by what the grand jury did as to Luzon Morris, Leverett Brainard, Henry C. Robinson, and Col. Frank W. Cheney, and in closing his written protest, said:

It is this particular part of the indictment programme that seems to me indecent and disgraceful. To rob a grave of the flowers piously strewn upon it or to deface the stone that marks a grave is wanton sacrilege. What then of the useless attempt to assail and dishonor the dead themselves who can no longer reply? I, for one, wish to speak plainly for my dear dead friends, and to protest against what seems to me a heedless if not wanton sacrilege. One would rather go to hell with some men than to heaven with others. I would rather my name should be in that black-list with such names as Morris, Brainard, Robinson, and Cheney than in the official list of their detractors and defamers.

Colonel Harvey truthfully remarks that this and other utterances manifestly indicate a bitterness of feeling more likely to be intensified than modified as time goes on. The Colonel is a little sorrowful about it, but the Colonel is a Spartan for the truth, and this is his conclusion:

It is idle to attempt to blink the fact that New England, whose accord and sympathy with an Administration whose chief attribute is intellectuality of the highest order, is definitely and it may prove to be permanently estranged. A pity, indeed, it is, but true."

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

(From the Bloomington Pantograph)

An event of more than passing importance in the magazine world during 1915 will be the celebration, during the entire year, of the centennial anniversary of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW. The first publication was in May, 1815, and it has never missed a number. It is the oldest magazine in America, and there are but two older in the world. No periodical has ever had abler or more famous contributors, and during the centennial year articles by experts in numerous lines of endeavor will appear in its pages. Under the guidance of Col. George Harvey THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW has taken on a new lease of life, and the venerable magazine has never been more popular and better appreciated than at the present time. Colonel Harvey, who, it is hardly too much to say, made Woodrow Wilson President of the United States, stands on a pedestal above all editorial writers of the present day, and his department in the REVIEW has added a zest and brilliance that were lacking before. Read-

ers of things worth while have a treat in store during the centennial year of THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW will begin its full-year celebration of its centenary with the January number. Colonel Harvey, who, incidentally, has been its editor longer than any one of his illustrious predecessors, contributes a characteristically whimsical foreword to the December REVIEW. He regrets the absence of William Tudor, the first editor, whom he characterizes as William the First, and rejoices in the presence of Mr. Howells, an editor in the sixties, whom he designates as William the Second, and who, he adds, appreciatively, "continually and with dogged persistence refreshes our minds and keeps them young."

THE RECESSIVES

(From the Charlotte Observer)

The Recessive party, Colonel Harvey named it just before the recent election, achieving for the second time a prophecy on which he can stand pat and to which he can point with pride.